

# IOWA BIRD LIFE

PUBLISHED QUARTERLY BY

## IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

Edited by FRED J. PIERCE

---

VOL. II

DECEMBER, 1932

NO. 4

---



### OFFICERS OF IOWA ORNITHOLOGISTS' UNION

President—Dr. F. L. R. Roberts, Iowa City, Iowa  
Vice-Pres.—Dr. G. O. Hendrickson, Ames, Iowa  
Secretary—Kate E. LaMar, Des Moines, Iowa  
Treasurer—Oscar P. Allert, McGregor, Iowa

#### Executive Committee:

Mrs. William Buzby, Boone, Iowa  
Dr. Paul L. Errington, Ames, Iowa  
O. S. Thomas, Rock Rapids, Iowa

---

SUBSCRIPTION RATES: In Iowa, \$1.00 a year. Outside of Iowa, 50c a year. Special rate for all libraries, public or college, 50c a year.

---

Orders for reprints from articles or extra copies of the journal must be in the hands of the editor before publication. Please notify the editor promptly of change of address and state whether the new address is permanent or temporary.

Field Notes on Iowa birds, book news, and historical or biographical material pertaining to Iowa ornithology are desired for publication.

---

EDITORIAL AND PUBLICATION OFFICE  
WINTHROP, IOWA

## SUGGESTIONS AS TO NESTING STUDIES ON IOWA GAME BIRDS\*

BY PAUL L. ERRINGTON

This article is written to all qualified persons who might desire and be in a position to cooperate with the wild life research staff of Iowa State College in the furtherance of studies of significance to conservation.

Species now in line for study include ducks and geese, Bobwhite Quail, Hungarian Partridge, Ring-necked Pheasant, Prairie Chicken, and Ruffed Grouse. Although all of these species are or have been game birds in various parts of the continent, and some—notably the exotics—we are trying to maintain at moderate population levels largely for sporting purposes, a species value or promise as shootable game is not the sole criterion by which its eligibility for management is judged. For instance, the Prairie Chicken and the Ruffed Grouse will probably never again be legally hunted in Iowa, yet the state will almost surely lose remnants priceless from the aesthetic standpoint unless moves based upon ecological findings are made for their preservation. The listing of the above species by no means implies that others are not worthy of consideration or will not eventually fall into the scope of the research program; the program had to start somewhere, however, and waterfowl and gallinaceous game seemed most in need of immediate attention.

There is evidence that the nesting season may be the weak link in the life history of some of these birds. It does not necessarily follow that the nesting season is the only weak link or the weakest; nevertheless, it is a critical period of which the attendant adverse factors need evaluation if they are to be wisely manipulated. Facts are always more or less useful. Simple management founded upon a substantial background of facts may materially enhance the carrying capacity of a given environment for a given species. Facts might furnish also a partial safeguard against the indefinite continuance of at least some of the bad ecology which has marked man's groping endeavors in wild life administration.

For the special phase of the research with which this article treats, voluminous data are needed. We need averages on a large number of nests to determine the proportion of those that succeed and to determine the reasons for those failing. The Iowa staff cannot hope by its own efforts alone to obtain these data in the quantities requisite for sound life history analyses. Hence, the active cooperation of competent observers among professional and amateur naturalists alike is specifically invited.

An exceptionally skilled observer may locate a comparatively large number of nests by direct search, but the number usually to be brought to light in this manner is apt to be quite small, especially the well concealed nests of some gallinaceous birds. Quail nests are reported chiefly by farmers who discover them by accident. On the other hand, Mallard and Blue-winged Teal nests may be located in quantities where they occur in concentrations.

The fact that some nests may be found by looking for them in no way detracts from the utility of having an effective local contact with interested parties who might run across nests or who would pass on word relative to neighbors or acquaintances who did. It is preferred that the nests to be kept under observation by a single person be

\*Journal Paper No. B79 of the Iowa Agricultural Experiment Station, Ames, Iowa.

situated within an area sufficiently restricted to permit of occasional visits without undue effort or expense.

Notes should be taken on salient details of all nests of the species investigated, whether the nests are live, hatched, deserted, or broken up. The nests should be of indubitable origin and typically those of wild birds. Unusual nests are worth noting but should not receive emphasis disproportionate to their value; after all, in wild life research we are concerned chiefly with the fathoming of normal life history questions.

Upon locating a live nest, assuming that the laying or incubating bird is not on the eggs and assuming that observations could be made without disarranging the surroundings, data should be secured as to:

1. Species (nests should be numbered and written up separately on individual sheets of paper).
2. Date and locality.
3. Number of eggs, if a count could be made without touching anything near the nest.
4. Environmental type in which nest was found, including conspicuous plant species. Examples: alfalfa field, nettle-grown drainage ditch, mixed bluegrass and timothy meadow or fencerow growth, goldenrod clump in pasture, etc.
5. Brief description of nest with reference to construction materials, presence or lack of roofing, degree of exposure to view, direction which opening faces, if any, adequacy of drainage in the event of rains, relation to sunlight.
6. Location with respect to miscellaneous objects which may afford added concealment or protection, i. e., logs, stumps, dead limbs, brush piles, posts, bushes, hummocks, dry grass or weed tufts, wire, metallic junk, etc.
7. Location with respect to paths, roads, beaches, gravel banks, cultivated fields, etc., suitable for sunning or dusting, or places noticeably attractive to the species.
8. Location with respect to known habitats and avenues of travel of swine, dogs, cats, raccoons, skunks, minks, weasels, barn rats, ground squirrels, Crows, turkeys, bull snakes, and sundry actual or suspected egg hunters. The foregoing is not to be constructed in entirety as a proscription list; enemies, however, have their role in the life equation of any species, and must be thought of in that connection.
9. Location with respect to food sources and rearing grounds for juveniles. In the case of duck nests, distances to water should be recorded.

As one of the primary objectives of the study is to obtain quantitative figures on the percentage of nests succeeding, the necessity should be stressed for the investigator to avoid so far as possible the disturbance of birds on live nests, especially disturbances prior to the first week of incubation, even though he may have to wait until after hatching to complete his notes. Very often most of the essential notes may be taken at a distance of several yards from the nests.

The number of eggs per clutch should be checked at every visit when safe opportunity presents itself, and the final completeness of the hatch ascertained. Unhatched eggs in a successful clutch should be opened to determine the advancement of the embryos. It is usually desirable to visit live nests every few days and to be on the scene soon after hatching, for one is thus able to pick up from time to time bits of evidence bearing upon nesting and juvenile mortality. A visit during the incubation period need be little more than a casual, sauntering walk past the nest, the while keeping watch unobtrusively to see that everything is all right. If the nest site has been fixed in



mind by its proximity to a conspicuous landmark or an artificial blaze, it may rarely be necessary to approach very near until the clutch has either definitely succeeded or failed.

In an ideally handled nesting study, not only should the data show the ratio of successful to unsuccessful nests, but should also show causes for the failures. Actually, the interpretation of nesting disasters from sign is so difficult that few investigators have ever attained proficiency. I'll confess that I am not one of the few. Aside from the rather diagnostic sign left by such egg eaters as dogs which allow strings of yolk, albumen, and shell particles from fresh eggs to drool on the ground, the story is more than likely to be undecipherable on the spot. One's best policy is to scrutinize the environs of a destroyed nest, write up fully an account of hair, feathers, tracks, diggings, runways, etc., nearby, then to **suspend judgment** until what fragmentary sign to be had begins to mean something, granted that it ever does. Specimens of opened egg shells (shells from normal hatches have the tops neatly sawed off the large end) should be preserved for future comparison with eggs known to have been opened by specific animals. Even the latter checking is not beyond criticism, for personal experiments with chipmunks and striped ground squirrels have demonstrated that there may be pronounced differences in the method by which a species or, for that matter, an individual opens shells to eat the contents.

Of course, the thoroughness with which an observer can study his nests varies according to the number he has under observation and the amount of time he can spare. Since excellent detailed studies have already been made from blinds on the nesting of most Iowa duck and gallinaceous bird species, further intensive work of this sort might not be in so much demand at present as less exact though mathematically significant data on a far greater number of nests. We must be able to speak in terms of hundreds of nests for a given species if our generalizations on the nesting of that species are really to have weight.

From the wild life management perspective, certain of our needs assume a fairly definite aspect. We need to learn not only where a species prefers to nest, but where it can and will when it has to. We need to learn to recognize, measure, and—if possible and to the public interest—control the principal factors responsible for the losses. The problems are innumerable and so complex and obscure that the best life history pictures we are likely to piece together may be disappointingly incomplete. But though the mysteries of lost nests may never come any nearer to solution, we have made progress of no slight consequence if only we can state concretely that out of a total of so many nests, so many were productive of young.

With a fuller knowledge of the vulnerable points in a species life history, we may ultimately be prepared to recommend intelligent management measures.

Iowa State College,  
Ames, Iowa

## THE AMERICAN EGRET IN IOWA IN 1932

By PHILIP A. DU MONT

During July, August, and September of 1932 the American Egret was noted by numerous observers throughout the state. The rather marked increase of this species as a late summer visitor has been more apparent during the past few years along the Atlantic seaboard, but in that locality the Little Blue Heron is usually several times more numerous and most frequently seen in the white plumage of the juvenal. However, in Iowa I know of no records of the Little Blue Heron since about 1903, and no specimens are extant. These Iowa records of the

Egret for 1932 have been secured through the Iowa State Fish and Game Department, through correspondence and conversation with observers, and from published notes. Undoubtedly there are others which should be reported through 'Iowa Bird Life'.

B. O. Wolden of Estherville reported a single bird seen during the last week of July and on August 2, in Emmet and Palo Alto Counties ('Iowa Bird Life', Vol. 2, pp. 39-40).

On October 16, Dr. T. C. Stephens wrote me as follows concerning an American Egret at Sioux City: "About the middle of August Mr. W. R. Felton called me to say that a 'white heron' had been reported at Brown's Lake by Game Warden F. T. Schwobe. On August 14 Mr. Felton and I went there and saw the bird at a considerable distance, and made a tentative identification. On August 19 I went again, this time with Wm. Youngworth. We went to the other end of the lake, and were able to get close enough to have a splendid view of the bird at rest and in flight. The yellow bill and black legs in clear light made certain the identification. From reports by people around the lake the bird appeared about the 1st of August and remained until at least the end of the month. Another egret was seen near Sioux City in the summer of 1931 (July 25) but this one was over in Union County, South Dakota, on Lake Goodenough, sometimes called Loblolly Lake." (See *Wilson Bulletin*, XLIII, 1931, p. 309).

In a letter from Mr. Youngworth on October 17 he states that the egret at Brown's Lake probably stayed until September 3. Another recent South Dakota occurrence was reported by him (*Wilson Bulletin*, XLIV, 1932, p. 47) of one "Authentically identified on June 4, 1929, by W. F. Kubichek, of Coe College, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. This bird was with a colony of Black-crowned Night Herons on a wooded island in Rush Lake, Day County". This specimen is now mounted in the collection of the Bert Heald Baily Museum at Coe College.

One was seen on July 25, twenty miles north of Des Moines by Wardens Mac Coons and Taylor Huston. Another was reported seen by a farmer living northwest of Perry, Dallas County ('Iowa Bird Life', Vol. 2, p. 39). Another observation in Polk County was of a single bird seen by Mr. and Mrs. A. J. Palas, Kenneth R. Nelson and the writer on August 21, near the Des Moines River, east of Avon. On September 5, Mr. Palas saw a flock of ten egrets at the same place, and they were found again on September 6, 8, and 9, when attempts were made to photograph them. On September 18 six birds were seen near Avon by the members of the Des Moines Audubon Society while on their regular field trip.

Mr. J. W. Lentz of Percy, Marion County, reported seeing a flock of twenty-one egrets about September 1. A letter from Mr. Lentz satisfied me that he was certain of the identification and had had favorable opportunities to observe them over a period of several days. The first birds were reported to him about August 1, and two were still present on September 16. This locality and the one visited by Mr. Palas are only about seven miles apart. The Fish and Game Department had another report from Marion County, of two birds seen around a small pond near Pella about the end of August.

A report from Rose Hill, Mahaska County, of three "Whooping Cranes," by Arthur Wilson may have been based upon an observation of the egret or the Wood Ibis. A letter to Mr. Wilson brought no further explanation.

Dr. E. J. Anthony of Iowa City, observed a "white heron" near Lone Tree, Johnson County, on September 17 and again on October 1. This bird was probably an egret as it was described as being the size of a Great Blue Heron, but Dr. Anthony believed the bird to have black-tipped wings.

In a communication from Prof. W. F. Kubichek of Coe College on



October 18 he says, "The American Egret was seen on the Cone Marsh about four miles west of Conesville in Louisa County. The dates are July 15 and August 24". Mr. Joseph Whiting, a student at the University of Iowa, reports seeing an egret near Conesville, but on east in Muscatine County about September 1.

In an article "Egrets in Iowa" (*Bird-Lore*, XXXIV, 1932, p. 332) C. F. Mueller of Davenport tells of seeing four egrets on August 21, at Credit Island, a part of the Davenport, Iowa, park system.

Mr. Harold Holland of Galesburg, Illinois, recorded (*Wilson Bulletin*, XLII, 1930, p. 289) the observing of a flock of thirty Snowy Egrets seen in northeastern Des Moines County, during August, 1930. In a letter from Mr. Holland on September 30, 1932, he says: ". . . . I had numerous opportunities to observe them at comparatively close range, and so very distinctly with glasses that identification was not difficult. Personally, there is no other definite record for Iowa, although white 'cranes', which may have been immature Little Blues, American, or Snowy Egrets, have at various times been reported. From descriptions as to size, a few American Egrets have been seen this year in that general locality, but close to the Mississippi. Early this month on my way to Ray Lake two white herons were noted near the river a little north of Burlington—from the highway, however, at some distance—and I did not have suitable glasses with me. They appeared smaller than the American Egret. In July and August of this year we have had a number of American Egrets around Galesburg".

While recently examining the collections of birds in Iowa, I have found five specimens of the American Egret that were collected in Iowa. In the Davenport Public Museum there is one, No. 6074, taken by H. M. Manderville, at Rockingham, Iowa, undoubtedly many years ago. In the collection at Iowa Wesleyan College, Mt. Pleasant, there is one from Burlington. In the Shaffer collection at the Jefferson County Library, Fairfield, Iowa, there are five specimens, but only two with data. One was shot on Cedar Creek near Krum, Jefferson County, in 1897. It was presented by Ward Lamson and mounted by H. F. Pumphrey. Another specimen was taken at Afton, Iowa. There is a female in the Dwight collection at the American Museum of Natural History, New York City, that was collected by William G. Savage at Hillsboro, Henry County, Iowa, May 9, 1895.

Museum of Natural History, University of Iowa,  
Iowa City, Iowa.

## GENERAL NOTES

**The Brewer's Blackbird in Iowa**—Last spring and this fall we have been watching for Brewer's Blackbird. Anderson, in his "Birds of Iowa" (1907), is somewhat vague but says it is a "rather rare straggler." He does not record any specimens as having been collected. Dr. T. S. Roberts calls it a common breeding bird throughout most of Minnesota. It certainly should pass through Iowa in migration, yet I have talked with many of our best observers and they have not recorded it. Mr. Philip A. DuMont tells me that he does not know of a specimen in any collection in the state, and he has examined the major collections.

It must have remained unnoticed because it associates with the very similar Rusty Blackbird. It is not impossible to differentiate the two in the field. To distinguish the female is simple. The female Rusty Blackbird has a yellow iris; the female Brewer's, a brown iris. The fact that Brewer's females are practically unstriped will distinguish them from the female Cowbirds and Red-winged-Blackbirds. The

male Brewer's has a yellow or whitish iris which is very noticeable. They are much smaller than grackles and have tails shorter in proportion. The male Rusties also have light irises, but have a very pronounced rusty, mottled appearance in the fall. In spring the male Rusty closely resembles the male Brewer's. Most Rusty Blackbirds will show some rusty, however. The bodies of both are black with green reflections. This green iridescence extends up onto the Rusty's head. The head of the Brewer's is noticeably different from its body, for it has a distinct purple cast. This is more easily seen than one might think.

On October 14, 1932, Mrs. Roberts and I saw two female Brewer's in a mixed flock of blackbirds. We were not sure of any males. They were about a mile north of Swan Lake in Johnson County, Iowa. On November 6, 1932, Mrs. Roberts, Mary Elaine Roberts, Philip A. DuMont and I saw a male and female Brewer's Blackbird in Johnson County, a mile east of the Iowa County line near U. S. highway No. 6.—DR. F. L. R. ROBERTS, Iowa City, Iowa.

**The Golden Eagle as a Pet.**—On November 1, 1931, just at nightfall, my attention was drawn to the excited calls of my poultry. Imagine my surprise when I saw that the object of terror was a large eagle. It had a beautiful coat of feathers, bright yellow claws, and large fiery eyes, and I knew at once the bird was a Golden Eagle, as I had seen a pair of them when I was in the West.

The bird's right wing was wounded. I examined it closely and found that it had been shot. I washed the wound carefully and did so every day for a month. Different methods of applying splints were tried but with no success, and at the end of the month I called a veterinarian. The following account from the local newspaper describes what took place at his visit: "Dr. C. E. Juhl performed one of the strangest operations of his career last Sunday afternoon, when he discovered that the Golden Eagle Mrs. Agnes Wagner is caring for was in dire danger of infection, and it was necessary to at once remove its broken wing. With the assistance of three substantially-built persons who happened to be there, the monarch of the air was finally pinned to the ground, and the doctor, with a hand saw, removed the wing, then sewed up the wound. The eagle seemed to bear no malice toward the doctor, but walked around with a rather speculative look in its eye during the remainder of the visit . . ."

About the third day after its wing was amputated, the eagle seemed as well as ever and quite contented to make his home here. The accompanying photos show the eagle before and after the wing was removed. The bird had a wing-spread of eight feet and eight inches.

I named the eagle Pretty Pal. Pretty Pal eats nothing but meat, and since I have had him he has eaten over fifty live chickens and many dead ones that my friends have brought him. He has also eaten a calf, a 350-pound hog, forty little pigs and twelve lambs that were frozen to death, dozens of cottontail rabbits, and several jack rabbits. I have several times withheld his food for some time to see if he would eat anything besides meat, but he would not. He drinks about two quarts of water each day, but dislikes to eat or drink when any strange persons are near. He is kept in a small building near my house, and this he seems to feel is home, returning to it of his own accord after being let out in the yard in the sun.—MRS. AGNES WAGNER, Mitchell, Iowa, November 7, 1932.



**Fall Migration Dates from Sioux City, Iowa.**—Below is listed a series of "latest" departure dates for various species over a period of five years.

#### SUMMER RESIDENTS

- |                                    |                                      |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Pied-billed Grebe, Nov. 5, 1929.   | W'n H'se Wren, Oct. 10, '30-32.      |
| Great Blue Heron, Nov. 15, 1928.   | Pr'ie M'sh Wren, Oct. 11, 1932.      |
| Green Heron, Sept. 17, 1931.       | Short-b'd M. Wren, Oct. 14, '29.     |
| Bl'k-cr'd N. Heron, Oct. 21, 1932. | Catbird, Oct. 4, 1930.               |
| American Bittern, Oct. 2, 1927.    | Brown Thrasher, Oct. 15, 1928.       |
| Sharp-shin'd Hawk, Nov. 22, 1931.  | Wood Thrush, Sept. 25, 1926.         |
| (specimen)                         | Migr. Shrike, Sept. 15, 1931.        |
| Cooper's Hawk, Dec. 17, '31 (sp.)  | Bell's Vireo, Sept. 12, 1928.        |
| Sparrow Hawk, Nov. 15, 1931.       | Red-eyed Vireo, Sept. 3, 1930.       |
| Sora Rail, Oct. 11, 1932.          | Warbling Vireo, Sept. 22, 1926.      |
| Killdeer, Nov. 5, 1929.            | Y'w Warbler, Sept. 16, 1929.         |
| Spotted Sandp'r, Sept. 29, 1930.   | Md. Y'w-throat, Oct. 10, 1930.       |
| Least Tern, Sept. 8, 1932.         | Meadowlark, Nov. 12, 1932.           |
| Black Tern, Sept. 19, 1926.        | Y'w-h'd Bl'bird, Oct. 2, 1927.       |
| Mourning Dove, Dec. 29, 1929.      | Red-w'd Bl'bird, almost resident     |
| Yellow-b'd Cuckoo, Oct. 1, 1929.   | some ys, Nov. 18, '28; Jan. 3, '32.  |
| Black-b'd Cuckoo, Oct. 28, 1927.   | Or'd Oriole, Sept. 18, 1928.         |
| Nighthawk, Oct. 11, 1926.          | Rusty Bl'bird, Nov. 15, 1928.        |
| Chimney Swift, Oct. 5, 1932.       | Bronzed Grackle, Nov. 12, 1932.      |
| Ruby-th't Hum'b'd, Sept. 28, 1931. | Cowbird, Nov. 6, 1932.               |
| Belted Kingf'r, Dec. 27, 1928.     | Scarlet Tan'r, Sept. 26, 1931.       |
| Red-h'd Woodp'r, often resident.   | Rose-b'd Grosb'k, Sept. 29, '32.     |
| Kingbird, Sept. 15, 1932.          | W'n Blue Grosb'k, Sept. 19, '32.     |
| Ark. Kingbird, Sept. 4, 1931.      | Indigo Bunt'g, Sept. 27, 1930.       |
| Phoebe, Sept. 29, 1931.            | Dickcissel, Sept. 10, 1929.          |
| Wood Pewee, Sept. 24, 1929.        | Grassh'r Sparrow, Oct. 8, 1931.      |
| Tree Swallow, Sept. 17, 1931.      | Ves'r Sparrow, Oct. 16, 1931.        |
| Bank Swallow, Sept. 30, 1926.      | Chip'g Sparrow, Oct. 21, 1926.       |
| Barn Swallow, Oct. 15, 1928.       | Field Sparrow, Oct. 29, 1929.        |
| Cliff Swallow, Sept. 5, 1932.      | S'g Sp'w, Nov. 23, '28; Feb. 7, '30. |
| Purple Martin, Sept. 29, 1930.     |                                      |

#### TRANSIENTS OR MIGRANTS

- |                                   |                                    |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| White Pelican, Oct. 4, 1931.      | Or'ge-cr'd Warbler, Oct. 16, '29.  |
| Canada Goose, Nov. 27, 1930.      | Nashv'e Warbler, Sept. 27, '30.    |
| Osprey, Sept. 8, 1932.            | Myrtle Warbler, Oct. 30, 1929.     |
| Semip'd Plover, Sept. 17, 1931.   | Palm Warbler, Oct. 18, 1928.       |
| Golden Plover, Oct. 28, 1932.     | Grinnell's W'r-th'sh, Oct. 1, '29. |
| Wilson's Snipe, Nov. 8, 1928.     | Wilson's Warbler, Sept. 10, '29.   |
| Solitary Sandp'r, Oct. 16, 1929.  | Purple Finch, Dec. 9, 1930.        |
| Lesser Y'w-legs, Oct. 21, 1932.   | Arctic Towhee, Oct. 18, 1928.      |
| Herring Gull, Oct. 21, 1932.      | Savannah Sp'w, Oct. 20, 1931.      |
| Ring-b'd Gull, Oct. 11, 1932.     | Leconte's Sparrow, Oct. 14, '32.   |
| Franklin's Gull, Oct. 21, 1932.   | Fox Sparrow, Nov. 5, 1928.         |
| Olive-s'd Flyc'r, Sept. 29, 1930. | Clay-cl'd Sp'w, Oct. 8, 1931.      |
| Winter Wren, Oct. 18, 1928.       | Harris's Sp'w, Dec. 5, 1926.       |
| Hermit Thrush, Sept. 25, 1926.    | White-c'd Sp'w, Oct. 16, 1928.     |
| Olive-b'd Thrush, Sept. 15, 1931. | White-th'd Sp'w, Oct. 30, 1929.    |
| Golden-c'd K'let, Dec. 26, 1929.  | Lincoln's Sp'w, Nov. 7, 1926.      |
| Ruby-c'd K'let, Oct. 18, 1928.    | Swamp Sparrow, Oct. 26, 1930.      |
| Blue-h'd Vireo, Sept. 15, 1931.   |                                    |

—WILLIAM YOUNG WORTH, Sioux City, Iowa.



**Some Robin Food.**—Recently the writer noticed a Robin clinging to the stock of a tiger lily, where the bird was picking off the hard black seeds of this plant. While the bird was watched it ate at least a dozen of the seeds before it had satisfied its hunger. The white fuzzy caterpillars, which are often found on the common bindweed, are also taken as food by Robins. Several birds have been seen lately to seize the caterpillars and take them to a bare spot where they proceeded to beat the worm from side to side on the rough cinders until all the hair had been completely knocked off. The bird would then devour the morsel or carry it to the nest.—WM. YOUNGWORTH, Sioux City, Iowa, July 21, 1932.

**The American Egret near Des Moines.**—Sunday morning, August 21, 1932, while Phil DuMont, Kenneth Nelson, Mr. Palas and I were hiking along the Des Moines River about ten miles southeast of Des Moines, we had the rare privilege of seeing an American Egret. We were in this vicinity several hours, so saw it repeatedly in good light and quite close at times.—MRS. A. J. PALAS, Des Moines, Iowa.

**An Experience with a Coot.**—One evening in late March, while driving along a byroad in Buchanan County, Iowa, I had an interesting experience with a Coot. Spring was in the air, and the early signs of its coming were evident in many places. Trees along the small streams were budding; frogs had awakened from their winter's torpor and at night trilled merrily from their haunts beside the ponds; and many of the earliest bird migrants had arrived or were arriving from the South. Among these feathered travelers were the Coots, or "mud hens," as the hunter calls them.

The road lay beside a small creek at one point, and as I reached this place I saw in the wide beams of the headlights a bird that was struggling violently in the middle of the road. I stopped the auto and walked toward it, half expecting to find a Screech Owl, for this bird is low-flying and frequently is struck by the auto at night. Instead, I found a Coot lying upon its back. It was vainly trying to get its feet into a position that would permit it to get up. I righted the unfortunate mud hen and it ran to the side of the road, evidently unhurt. The bird's actions puzzled me considerably. It occurred to me, however, that it might have a minor injury that was not then apparent. I again caught it; this time I placed it in the car with me and took it to my home.

When I handled the Coot, I was much surprised to learn the amount of force that lay behind its pointed beak. It pecked my fingers in no uncertain manner; indeed, it literally dived at my whole hand, while the blow it imparted was equal to that of a domestic sitting hen that is not desirous of being removed from her nest. It not only pecked—it held on with the grip of a pair of strong pliers. I was convinced that an enemy would receive a *sharp* reception if the Coot were apprised of its approach in time to put its formidable weapon to work. After I had entered the house I gave the Coot temporary liberty. I was amused at the celerity it displayed in getting out of the light. It ran into a bedroom and when I searched for it I found it had hidden as well as it could among a pile of shoes in a closet. It was placed in a cardboard box for the night.

Early next morning I took it to the small stream along which it had been found the night before. The box was put on a sandbar near the water. Finding the door to freedom open, it made an eager dash for the water and swam rapidly away, once attempting to fly, paddling its large lobed feet on the surface of the water as it did so. There was no doubt but that it was overjoyed to be able to get away from me. My last glimpse was of a contented Coot swimming easily in a stretch

of placid water some distance away, the head and neck going back and forth in the characteristic Coot movement that gives the bird the appearance of walking on the bed of the stream instead of swimming on its surface. The Coot had not been injured—of that I was certain. It seems probable that it had alighted in the roadway in an awkward manner that had upset it and left it in the position in which I found it a few minutes later.

I remember having seen a dead Coot not far out of the business district of a good sized city through which a river ran. The body was lying in the middle of the street. No doubt this Coot had been following the river's course after nightfall and the glow of the street lights upon wet pavement misled it into thinking that below lay a stretch of smooth water. A passing motorcar had struck it soon after it alighted.—FRED J. PIERCE, Winthrop, Iowa.

**Brief Notes.**—On October 10, 1932, two female White-winged Scoters were brought into the Museum of Natural History, University of Iowa. They had been killed by Carl Kurtz, in Johnson County, Iowa, from a flock of five birds of the same kind. They were mounted for the Museum by Professor Dill.

In a recent note from Prof. W. F. Kubichek of Coe College, he reports a flock of sixty-two Starlings seen south of Cedar Rapids on October 4, 1932. This flock seems to be exceeded in size by only one other report—that of Mr. John Kennedy of Des Moines, who saw a flock of 118 near the north entrance to the Backbone State Park, Clayton County, on June 29, 1932. A new exhibit at the University Museum is a group of Starlings showing the various plumages. This group was prepared originally for exhibition at the Iowa State Fair. A map showing the distribution of the Starling in Iowa has been prepared, and sixty-eight occurrences, including six breeding records, are shown.—PHILIP A. DU MONT, Iowa City, Iowa.

**Watching the Great Blue Heron in 1868.**—About the middle of June, 1868, brother and I were fishing for bullheads in the ponds below the long spring on the Tarheel Wilson homestead in Black Hawk County, Iowa. It was a hazy summer day. In places the wild grass along the banks of the stream was tall, and from it the wind wafted a refreshing aroma, for there were clumps of wild mint, pennyroyal and monarda mingled with the sward. Suddenly, as we were lazily reclining upon the bank reveling in boyhood dreams, we realized a shadow had passed over us for the sunshine was momentarily dimmed and we felt a faint fan-like breeze on our faces. Rover, our dog, jumped up and sniffed the air. We arose and looking around saw winging its way northward, close to the channel of Ellsworth Creek, a large bird of a kind unknown to us. We watched until it lit in the stream near the little bluff. Our curiosity was aroused as to the sort of bird it might be.

We ceased fishing and walked quietly and cautiously towards the spot where the bird apparently had alighted. We did not speak a word and the fall of our sun-tanned and soil-toughened feet upon the grass-carpeted sod was as noiseless as the tread of moccasined Indian's. Rover, a tan and white bird dog whose life was given to chasing cattle rather than hunting game, tagged along, now keenly awake. We wished if possible to locate and observe the bird before it would see us and fly away. Finally we sighted it, standing like a sentinel, keeping vigil over the shallow water where the yellow pond lilies crowded its surface. We attentively regarded the unusual bird. Sometimes its head was held high in the air as if listening. Then again it would look down into the water. We perceived it was darting its long bill at something and then we realized it was catching minnows. For some moments our eyes were dazzled by its fascinating beauty. Such



a tall graceful bird with a long slim neck, straight, narrow, sharp-pointed beak, slender legs and its body vested with charming plumage, was a delightful vision. It stood four feet or more in height and appeared to be five feet when it poised with its bill pointing upward. It had not heard us for we were at the leeward, and if we did make a slight noise the vibrations did not reach the ears of the bird. It stood fixed and motionless, forming with its environment a captivating scene. Many years later I saw its counterpart in Algeria—a statue of an aquatic bird carved from blue marble set in an artificial lake, which was filled with Egyptian lotus and located on a terraced southern bank of the Mediterranean Sea.

Our curiosity somewhat appeased by observing its movements, brother and I stalked forth from our high grass screen and approached quite near before it discovered us. The bird deliberately turned its head, gazed fixedly at us, then slowly raised its pinions and emitting a loud croak, flew low up the stream to the north. The outstretched wings appeared to have a spread of nearly six feet. We watched it closely, hoping that it would light again along the creek; it did, in a large pond some distance from where we had stood watching. Anxious to get another view of the great bird with the lustrous blue feather robe, we followed; however, before we caught sight of it again our dog Rover broke away and scared it into flight. Apparently it was thoroughly frightened by the dog, for it rose higher in the air than previously and flew north. What kind of large bird it was brother and I did not know, but after describing it to father, he said it was a Great Blue Heron, so called to distinguish it from the Little Blue Heron. He had seen two flying up and down the stream at various times, and, he added that somewhere, perhaps on top of a red cedar tree along the Cedar River, the pair might be nesting. Possibly their rookery was near the junction of the Shell Rock, West Fork and Cedar Rivers, where there were many large, thick foliaged cedar trees. They flew to the shallow waters of the small streams and ponds to catch minnows and frogs. The birds were afterwards seen by brother and me numerous times during the summer and we always watched their fishing tactics and lone flights with boyhood interest; early in the fall they disappeared, going to their haunts in the southland.

When one has once visioned this bird its rare beauty will always be remembered. If it becomes alarmed when spying into a stream or pond for fish or frogs, it poses for a moment with its bill pointing straight upward before taking flight. It seems to love the solitude of swamps and dense evergreen forests. Its call is a hollow croaking noise. It is especially skillful in snapping dragon-flies which may dart over the water near it. It is only a guest of summer. While protected by the national game laws, this beautiful wading bird's appearance along streams and lakes is growing less frequent with the passing years.—ELLIS E. WILSON, Waterloo, Iowa.

**Notes on Nesting Birds in Northwestern Missouri.**—Our yard, which covers almost two acres and is filled quite thickly with large trees, seems to be a favorite place for nests. There are at least three Robins' nests, two Blue Jays' nests, one dove's and two woodpeckers' nests in the yard. I suspect there is a pair of Black-capped Chickadees building in one of the hollows in an old elm, but I have not as yet been able to verify my suspicion.

There is an old elm stub about eighteen feet high in the back yard. It is almost entirely rotted and is a pepper-pot of woodpecker holes. Yesterday, while milking, I looked up at it and beheld a rather unusual sight. I saw a Flicker in a nest-hole with only his head emerging. In another nest-hole about ten feet farther up there was a Red-bellied Woodpecker. Still farther up, perched on the top of the snag, was a



male Red-headed Woodpecker. He was holding heated discussion with the Red-bellied Woodpecker three feet below, and I inferred that he was accusing the other of being a thief, as I know the Red-head raised a family in the stub last summer. The old tree might be called the "Tree of Life," or something similar, for at least three other species have shown themselves attracted to it this year. A flock of migrating Bluebirds seemed to have used its multiplicity of holes as a hotel one night in late February. English Sparrows were carrying feathers to some of the holes for some time before the woodpeckers pre-empted the apartments. And in February a pair of English Starlings, the first I had ever seen, spent an hour or two each day for about two weeks looking over the various apartments. The male would usually mount guard after that for two or three hours more, and the strangest medley of chirps, hisses, catcalls and imitations that I have ever heard would issue from his throat. The Starlings finally became tired of the location and disappeared.

I have observed two rather unusual locations for nests this year. One of them is a Robin's on the tail piece of a windmill fifty feet off the ground. The old bird sits up there on four eggs, and the changes of the wind swings the rods on which she has her nest in a very dizzy manner. The other nest is that of a Brown Thrasher, which is just built and has one egg in it. The old bird has gone out into an oat-field 200 yards from any brush and located the nest at the foot of a curly-dock plant. I pass by the nest every day or two and the bird flies up and usually hovers in the air until I leave. Occasionally, she alights in the short oats a few feet away and scolds.—C. N. DAVIS, Bethany, Missouri, May 10, 1932.

**Bird Study in Missouri.**—Let me thank you for the copy of 'Iowa Bird Life' with a notice of my "Catalog of the Birds of Missouri." Your quarterly is a very nice publication and I wish we had one like it in Missouri, where little ornithological work has been done in the last twenty-five years. But we have now a St. Louis Bird Club and a Webster Groves Nature Study Society, both with good observers, but no collecting. Many subspecies can not be told by simply looking at them, for they need measuring. We have now a new center for study of ornithology in our State University at Columbia, where Professor Rudolf Bennett and Dr. Farris H. Woods have undertaken the preparation of a new Check-list for the state. Of course, I should like to see more of my "Catalog" sold before the new Check-list appears. For ten or more years the Academy of Science, publisher and owner of the "Catalog," told inquirers that my book was out of print, until not long ago the new president, Mr. Satterthwait, found a bundle of 100 copies in the attic of the Academy building. I am interested in Iowa birds since the early eighties, when Lynds Jones was a student at Grinnell.—OTTO WIDMANN, St. Louis, Mo., September 26, 1932.

**Notes on Ducks for the Fall Season of 1932.**—Mr. Harry Hammond and the writer spent many pleasant hours in a duck blind at Lake Goodenough, Union County, South Dakota, which is about three miles from Sioux City. We tried to keep a count of the number of ducks seen and of the different species which passed the blind. While the count is not accurate down to the single bird, yet it is close enough to give one a fairly good idea of the number of ducks which come to a given lake during one season.

**MALLARD.** This species was the most abundant of the ducks, with the main flight coming after mid-season. It was estimated that about 7000 birds were seen.

**GADWALL.** Not more than 100 of these big gray ducks were seen during the fall.

**BALDPATE.** This species was found in about the same numbers as the Gadwall.

**GREEN-WINGED TEAL.** About 250 of these pretty little ducks were seen early in the season.

**BLUE-WINGED TEAL.** This duck makes up most of the early flight and about 1000 birds were seen.

**SHOVELLER.** Less than 100 birds were listed.

**PINTAIL.** Not very common this year, only about 200 were noticed.

**WOOD DUCK.** The first two days of the season about twenty birds were seen by Mr. Hammond and according to him, hunters got most of them, not distinguishing them in flight from the other ducks.

**RED-HEAD.** About 100 of these fine birds were seen.

**CANVAS-BACK.** The main migration flight of this species seems to be east of Sioux City and only three Canvas-backs were found on the lake.

**LESSER SCAUP DUCK.** This well marked species was found in some numbers and at least 1500 birds were seen during the fall.

**RING-NECKED DUCK.** Although only one bird was actually taken, no doubt there were others on the lake during the season.

**BUFFLE-HEAD.** Not more than twenty-five of these birds were listed during the season.

**AMERICAN GOLDEN-EYE.** One lone female was taken as it came whistling over the blind.

**RUDDY DUCK.** This chunky little species was not much in evidence and not more than fifty were counted.

**HOODED MERGANSER.** The writer saw two birds early in the fall, and Mr. Hammond shot two on November 5.

It was noticed that the average hunter did not spare the Ruddy or Buffle-head ducks this fall, either because he didn't care whether the species were protected or not, or because he didn't actually separate the birds from other small species. I think that the latter remark is, however, closer to the truth, because in the poor light of the opening hour it is very difficult to pick out your species, as they come flashing by the blind.—WM. YOUNG WORTH. Sioux City, Iowa.

## MEMBERSHIP NEWS

New Iowa members since our last issue are: Mrs. O. E. Gilcrest, Des Moines; Mrs. Grace Gilbert King, West Union; Miss Dora J. Kruger, Ionia; Miss Dorothy Caskey Wilson, Waterloo; J. G. Wyth, Cedar Falls.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dr. Stephens suggests that we attempt to build up two complete sets of our mimeographed "Bulletin," issued 1923-1928, for depositing with the two Iowa historical societies in Des Moines and Iowa City. For historical purposes we should try to leave as many sets as possible of this now rare series of letters, and Dr. Stephens' suggestion is well worth while. Although a large number of copies of these letters were issued, it is doubtful if there are many complete sets now in existence. Dr. Stephens has one, Mr. Rosene has another, and there may be a few others that we have not heard of. But no doubt there are many odd copies scattered over the state which could be collected into sets with the cooperation of the membership. The Editor is willing to receive and assemble these copies into sets. If you have extra copies of the letters which you do not care to keep, he suggests that you send them to him for this purpose. If several sets can be assembled in this way, Iowa ornithology will be benefited.

\* \* \* \* \*

This issue of our magazine has sixteen pages instead of twelve because of the generosity of one of our members who is paying the cost of the additional four pages.



**Bird Literature.**—The Iowa Fish and Game Commission (Des Moines) recently published an illustrated, 35-page bulletin entitled "Management of Upland Game Birds." The preface states that the greater part of it was prepared by Aldo Leopold. It is made up of chapters on organized game management, improving game cover and food, and the various requirements for successful quail, pheasant, and Hungarian Partridge management. The bulletin is intended for free distribution and will prove highly instructive to those interested in game farming, in addition to having considerable general interest.

The Mass. Dept. of Agriculture (Boston) announces that the series of colored plates by Fuertes and Brooks, published in Forbush's "Birds of Massachusetts," is now available in a separate volume sold for \$1.75.

The Cleveland (Ohio) Museum of Natural History has published, as Vol. III of its 'Scientific Publications', "Physiology of the Temperature of Birds," by Baldwin and Kendeigh. The book has 196 pages, and is illustrated by six plates and numerous text figures. In the copy at hand the selling price is not stated.

We believe that the most noteworthy contribution to the ornithology of the Mississippi Valley published at any time is "The Birds of Minnesota," by Dr. Thomas S. Roberts, which appeared in the late spring of this year. This two-volume work on the birds of our neighboring state has enjoyed a very wide distribution, due partly to the fact that it is sold for \$6 a set when the cost of publication was really more than \$14. With its fine colored plates, hundreds of text illustrations, and vast store of information on the birds of the Middle West, it is of inestimable value to Iowa bird students. The editions of many bird books are exhausted long before the demands for them are filled, and we advise our members to order this work before it is out of print. Address the University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.

"Extracts from the Diary of Otto Widmann" is the title of a collection of eight papers on Missouri birds from the pen of this well known ornithologist. They are printed in a booklet of 77 pages, and as the page size is the same as that of Widmann's "Catalog of the Birds of Missouri," the two publications may well be bound together for the library. The "Extracts" were published by the Academy of Science of St. Louis and the booklet is sold for 65c.

Send in your bird notes for publication. It is impossible to send every member a personal invitation to contribute his notes. We need brief field notes for every issue and shall much appreciate all that are received.

**A Note From Mrs. Bailey.**—Our former Secretary, Mrs. Bailey, who has been traveling in Europe during the past six months, writes from Budapest, Hungary, under date of November 11, 1932. She says in part:

"Here's greetings to my dear friends in the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. I have thought of you so many times and of 'Iowa Bird Life.' I am having a wonderful time. I have spent nearly a month in Vienna, and have heard opera symphony, philharmonic music, and other smaller concerts. I enjoyed them all. I shall be in Florence until Dec. 15, and after that shall be in Naples until the first of the year.

"The blackbirds sing a wonderful song over here, but not now; they are in flocks as in our country. The Red-breasted Nuthatch, which is larger than ours, was common in Vienna. I have seen nothing but gulls here. This city lies on both sides of the Danube and is very beautiful."

On the title page of this issue we present the official seal adopted by the Iowa Ornithologists' Union. The design was prepared by the



Engineering Dept. of Iowa State College. The Goldfinch was chosen as State Bird and official emblem of the Union at our annual meeting in Des Moines last spring. Many bird nominees for this position were mentioned at that time and much discussion resulted. We were told that this matter had been brought up at many previous meetings, but was never before definitely settled. Indeed, the question seems to have been a hardy perennial, for we read in the account of the meeting of the Audubon Society of the State of Iowa, on March 13, 1900, that "the society has 137 members and has chosen for its badge the American Red Bird or Cardinal, it remaining with us all winter and having no objectional features or characteristics." (*Western Ornithologist*, No. 3, 1900, p. 61.) The magazine in which this item appears was issued at Avoca, Iowa, but after three issues publication was suspended.

\* \* \* \* \*

Mr. Youngworth's list of fall departure dates for the Sioux City region is very interesting for purposes of comparison, and we shall be glad to receive similar fall lists from other territories within the state.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Nebraska Ornithologists' Union is to begin the new year with a printed quarterly publication to be called "Nebraska Bird Review." This will take the place of the "Letter of Information," a mimeographed bulletin which has been issued for several years past.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have two very interesting articles for the March issue. One is "My Winter Woodland Neighbors," a descriptive article on nature in the Ledges State Park, by Carl Fritz Henning. The other article is by Mr. DuMont and takes up the problem of the various plumages of "The Iowa Red-tailed Hawks."

\* \* \* \* \*

A special fund for halftone plates would perhaps be a desirable feature in connection with our magazine, since it would insure our having at least one illustration for every issue. Mrs. Wagner sent several interesting photographs with her article which is printed in this issue. If such a fund had been available, we could have had a halftone illustrating her Golden Eagle pet. Halftones are, of course, expensive. The cost varies with the size of the cut, with a minimum of \$2.50. The method of establishing the fund is worthy of consideration by our officers. It could perhaps be made possible through contributions of members, by setting aside a small per cent of the dues, or by other means. Suggestions are invited.

\* \* \* \* \*

In our effort to make up a list of the complete sets of *The Iowa Ornithologist*, we have heard of a dozen or more duplicate copies which are for disposal. Those wishing to procure certain issues of this rare old magazine may communicate with the Editor in regard to these. The list of sets is growing and will be published in a later issue.

\* \* \* \* \*

Treasurer Allert reports that all bills are paid up to December 1, and there is a balance of \$140 in the treasury. In spite of the conditions of the times, our members have been very loyal and generous, and Mr. Allert has been able to keep the funds at a very satisfactory figure.

\* \* \* \* \*

The stock of back numbers of "The Bulletin, Iowa Ornithologists' Union," which has been stored at Spirit Lake for several years, is to be shipped to Dr. Roberts soon, and will be available to those who need certain issues to complete their files. These will be supplied at a small charge to cover cost of mailing, etc. Write Dr. Roberts in regard to the issues you need. His address is 419½ South Governor St., Iowa City.

## A MESSAGE FROM PRESIDENT ROBERTS

To Our Members:

We are nearing the end of another very successful year for our organization. Our convention at Des Moines was a great success and resulted in much publicity for our defense of hawks and owls. The State Fish and Game Commission has issued an educational bulletin "Know Iowa Hawks," which is fair to our birds of prey, and we believe that the influence of the Union was partly responsible. One of our members, Mr. DuMont, looked over this bulletin and changed parts to correspond with modern conservation views.

We feel that the improvement in the shore-bird law was partly due to our effort. The season this year on shore-birds did not begin before the open season on water fowl.

Only a few states have a bird organization that has a printed periodical, and, of these, our 'Iowa Bird Life' is outstandingly one of the best. It has given excellent service as an exchange for information and has contained many important records.

In this year of depression, while many other organizations are struggling to carry on at all, we have increased our membership. We have 26 new members and six new subscribers. We have lost less than a third this number of members.

These results we are proud of. They have been achieved by earnest effort of our officers and by loyal cooperation of our members.

You can do a real service to the Union by sending in your 1933 dues now. This will save the Secretary the work and expense of sending you a notice. The fee is one dollar and includes subscription to 'Iowa Bird Life.' They are due January first and should be sent to MISS KATE LA MAR, 1231 THIRTY-NINTH ST., DES MOINES.

Sincerely,

DR. F. L. R. ROBERTS, President

### BOSTON BIRD BOOK COMPANY

We have many old and rare Bird and Nature Books, Magazines and Pamphlets; also State and Local Lists of Birds.

162 Boylston St.,  
Boston, Mass.

### ONLY 1000 LEFT

Iowa Ornithologists' Union  
DAILY FIELD CHECKING  
LISTS

will be sold at the greatly reduced price of 1/2c each while they last. Order now!

KATE E. LA MAR, Sec'y,  
1231 Thirty-ninth St.,  
Des Moines, Iowa

## DAUBER & PINE BOOKSHOPS INC.

*Sixty-Six Fifth Avenue - New York*

### NATURAL HISTORY DEPARTMENT

Located in The Annex  
No. 8 West 13th Street  
New York, N. Y.

The only book concern in New York with a separate department devoted to books on Natural Science in all its branches.

We publish catalogues at frequent intervals.